

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 DPW-01 PRS-01 OMB-01 SS-15 SSO-00

INRE-00 /069 W

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O R 261030Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3046

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USIA WASHDC

USDEL JEC PARIS

CIA

DIA

JCS

JUSMAAG

WHITE HOUSE

USAJFKCMA/ATCS-WL-DSA

CINCPAC

CINCPACAF

CINCPACFLT

DEPCHIEF JUSMAAG UDORN

USDAO SAIGON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 SAIGON 2108

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPT PASS IMMEDIATE IBS/NCA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PINS, PINT, MILI, VS, PFOR, PARM, ICRC, DA, NL
SUBJ: EMBASSY SAIGON'S MISSION WEEKLY FOR FEB 20-26,1975

WEEKA ITEMS

--THE MILITARY SITUATION

--OPPOSITION STEPS UP ATTACKS ON GVN

--ARCHBISHOP REITERATES BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN CHURCHES

--WCC GROUP VISITS SAIGON

--SVN MOBILIZATION LAW DEVELOPMENTS

--NEW COUNCILMEN ELECTED IN PHU YEN, ELECTIONS SLATED IN PLEIKU

--DANISH AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

--GVN AMBASSADOR MEETS DUTCH OFFICIALS

--IMF CONSULTATION

--DOMESTIC REVENUES IN JANUARY UPTURN

--PRICES CONTINUE DOWNTURN

--DOLLAR AND GOLD PRICES DIP

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I. INTERNAL

A. THE MILITARY SITUATION

COUNTRY THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY WAS SOMEWHAT HIGHER THAN A WEEK
AGO, ALTHOUGH OVERALL IT WAS AT A RELATIVELY MODERATE LEVEL.
THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS, AS WELL AS THE NUMBER OF GVN AND NVA/
VC KILLED IN ACTION BASED ON INITIAL BATTLEFIELD REPORTS,

ALL ROSE ABOUT 25 PERCENT. THERE WAS NO SERIOUS FIGHTING NORTH OF THE HAI VAN PASS IN MR-1, WITH FIGHTING SOUTH OF THE PASS AGAIN OCCURRING AT A MODERATE LEVEL. BINH DINH PROVINCE IN MR-2, AND MR-3 GENERALLY, SHOWED A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE, WITH SAPPER ACTIVITY AROUND SAIGON AGAIN BEING A COMMUNIST FOCUS IN THE LATTER AREA.

THE TET LULL HAS CLEARLY ENDED IN MR-3, WHERE ACTIVITY INCREASED ABOUT 50 PERCENT THIS WEEK. THE EMPHASIS, HOWEVER, WAS ONCE AGAIN MARKED SAPPER ACTIVITY, PARTICULARLY AROUND SAIGON, AND COMMUNIST SHELLING OF GVN POSITIONS IN THE TAY NINH CITY AREA. NVA TROOP BUILD-UPS ALSO CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE AREA, ESPECIALLY IN TAY NINH PROVINCE.

FIGHTING IN THE DELTA WAS AT ITS LOWEST EBB SINCE LATE NOV. GVN UNITS WERE AGAIN CARRYING INITIATIVE IN ORDER TO KEEP THE COMMUNISTS OFF BALANCE.

B. OPPOSITION STEPS UP ATTACKS ON GVN

WITH EYE ON UPCOMING CODEL VISIT, A WIDE SPECTRUM OF OPPOSITION GROUPS HAVE STEPPED UP ATTACKS ON GOV'T. MOST OF ACTIVITY HAS FOCUSED ON DEMANDING REVERSAL OF GVN'S FEB 3 STEPS TO ENFORCE PRESS CODE.

DESPITE GOV'T'S ANNOUNCED INTENTION OF FILING MOTION IN SAIGON COURT FEB 20 DROPPING LONG-STANDING PRESIDENTIAL LIBEL CHARGES AGAINST SIX NEWSPAPERS (SAIGON 1805), SOME 35 MILITANT LAWYERS, REPORTERS, PRIESTS AND OPPOSITION LEGISLATORS SHOWED UP IN COURT ANYWAY WHERE THEY REPORTEDLY DISTRIBUTED, WITHOUT INCIDENT, A MANIFESTO LISTING THE "14 MAJOR CASES" SINCE OCT 1 IN WHICH THE GOV'T ALLEGEDLY VIOLATED LAW TO SUPPRESS OPPOSITION.
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IN RELATED INCIDENT SAME DAY, POLICE DISPERSED GROUP OF SOME 50 DEMONSTRATORS, INCLUDING STUDENTS, RELATIVES OF 18 ARRESTED NEWSMEN AND MILITANT BUDDHIST NUNS, GATHERING IN LOCAL SAIGON MARKET WITH REPORTED INTENTION OF CONDUCTING DISORDERLY MARCH ACROSS TOWN TO PRESS TRIAL. TWO OF FOUR DEPUTIES LEADING DEMONSTRATION WERE SLIGHTLY INJURED IN SCUFFLES WITH POLICE. DEPUTIES KIEU MONG THU AND HO NGOC NHUAN WERE ESCORTED TO PUBLIC PROSECUTOR WHO WARNED THEM PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY DOES NOT COVER FLAGRANTE DELICTO OFFENSES BUT ORDERED THEIR RELEASE PENDING FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

PACM NAMED CLOSURE OF FIVE NEWSPAPERS "ILLEGAL AND ILLOGICAL", APPEALED TO GOV'T TO REINSTATE THEIR LICENSES, AND CALLED FOR PROMPT TRIAL OF 18 NEWSMEN BEFORE MILITARY

COURT. PACM PLANNED A SERIES OF PROTEST MEETINGS IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS, WHICH DREW REACTION FROM SAIGON ARCHBISHOP BINH (SEE BELOW).

AN QUANG SENATOR VU VAN MAU ALSO CALLED FOR THE GOV'T TO RELEASE 18 NEWSMEN OR TRY THEM PUBLICLY. HE SIMILARLY DEMANDED GOV'T PRESS LEGAL CHARGES AGAINST THE FIVE CLOSED NEWSPAPERS OR ALLOW THEM TO REOPEN. LOWER HOUSE PEOPLE'S SOCIETY BLOC LEADER TRAN VAN TUYEN DEMANDED REOPENING OF FIVE NEWSPAPERS AND RELEASE OF 18 ACCUSED COMMUNIST AGENTS AS WELL AS RESIGNATION OF GOV'T.

TEN FAMILIAR EXTREMIST GROUPS REPORTEDLY ISSUED JOINT DECLARATION CALLING FOR "AN END TO FOREIGN AID". SIGNERS INCLUDED NUN HUYNH LIEN, MME NGG BA THANH, FR CHAN TIN, FR PHAN KHAC TU, DEPUTY HO NGOC NHUAN AND VEN NHAT HANH.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3047

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 SAIGON 2108

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

DEPT PASS IMMEDIATE IBS/NCA

COMMENT: COMBINATION OF PRESS CLOSURES AND ARRESTS AND ARRIVAL OF US CODEL HAS STIRRED UP A HORNETS' NEST OF ACTIVITY AMONG ALL ELEMENTS OF OPPOSITION. HOWEVER, WHILE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS SHOW SOMEWHAT GREATER WILLINGNESS TO SIGN COMMON PROTEST DECLARATIONS, MODERATE OPPOSITIONISTS STILL ESCHUEW COMPANY OF RADICALS LIKE TEN CITED ABOVE. SIMILARLY, THERE IS STILL NO SIGN OF MEANINGFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN MAJOR BUDDHIST AND CATHOLIC OPPOSITION GROUPS IN CARRYING OUT PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS.

C. ARCHBISHOP REITERATES BAN ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN CHURCHES

SAIGON ARCHBISHOP NGUYEN VAN BINH ABOUT FEB 20 WROTE TO PASTOR OF XOM MOI PARISH, SAIGON, REMINDING HIM OF STANDING INJUNCTION AGAINST USING PARISHES FOR PURELY POLITICAL PURPOSES, ACCORDING TO ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE. XOM MOI WAS PARISH PACM HAD CHOSEN FOR FIRST OF FOUR SCHEDULED PUBLIC MEETINGS ON SUBJECT OF PRESS FREEDOM IN WAKE OF ARRESTS OF 18 NEWSMEN AND SHUTDOWNS OF FIVE PAPERS. SAIGON PRESS GAVE WIDE COVERAGE TO BINH'S MOVE.

ALTHOUGH MOM XOI MEETING DULY CANCELLED, NEXT TWO MEETINGS

IN SERIES WERE HELD. WHETHER PACM ACTION WILL PROVOKE REACTION
FROM ARCHBISHOP IS UNKNOWN. BINH IS OUT OF TOWN UNTIL FEB 29.

D. WCC GROUP VISITS SAIGON

THREE-MAN WORLD
COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC) DELEGATION
COMPRISING TWO JAPANESE AND ONE AMERICAN (MR LAMAR GIBBLE)
SPENT SEVERAL DAYS IN SAIGON LAST WEEK. DELEGATES MET WITH
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GOV'T CRITICS INCLUDING FR TRAN HUU THANH, AN QUANG HIGH
SECULAR COUNCIL SECRETARY GENERAL THICH QUANG DO, FR NGUYEN
NGOC LAN, AND FR CHAN TIN. THEY ALSO REPORTEDLY TALKED WITH
SOME SENATORS AND AT LEAST ONE GOV'T OFFICIAL, DEPUTY PM DR.
PHAN QUANG DAN. DELEGATES DID NOT CONTACT EMBASSY.

FOREIGN NEWS AGENCY HERE WHO SOPKE WITH WCC GROUP TOLD
US DELEGATES NOT ANXIOUS FOR NEWS PUBLICITY. AGENCY ALSO
SAID GVN TURNED ONE DELEGATE BACK AT AIRPORT, THOUGH THREE
WHO ENTERED WOULD NOT SAY WHY. DELEGATES REPORTEDLY SAID
THEY WERE HERE TO SPEAK QUIETLY WITH FIGAXTS REPRESENTING
VARIOUS SHADES OF OPINION IN ORDER TO LEARN SITUATION. THEY
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BCXGOLDYGTMV DISCUSS THEIR FINZYAGSM

E. SVN MOBILIZATION LAW DEVELOPMENTS

DURING THE PAST MONTH THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE PRESS
SPECULATION ABOUT PENDING CHANGES IN SOUTH VIETNAMESE
MOBILIZATION LAWS. ONE PROPOSAL REPORTEDLY BEFORE THE
CABINET WBAVPDABOLISH
NXPLACE MOBILIZATION-EXCEPT FOR
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS-FOR ALL YOUNG MEN FROM 18-33 YEARS OF
AGE, THEREBY LOWERINR THE MAXIMUM AGE FOR UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENT BY
ONE YEAR. THE RUMORS REGARDING AMENDMENT OF THE CONSCRIPTION
LAWS REACHED THE POINT WHERE THE GOV'T PRESS SPOKESMAN, ON
FEB 28- M

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9-7\$94&49)YT""39?8)8"ATION"
ISSUE. PRESENTLY THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 700,000 MEN
RECEIVING DEFERMENT STATUS.

GVN HAS TAKE TWO RECENT DECISIONS CONCERNING MILITARY
PERSONNEL. THE PRIME MINISTER PROMULGATED DECREE LAW
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27-SL-QP ON FEB 22 CANCELLING THE DEMOBILIZATION OF ALL
RESERVISTS FROM THE RANK OF CAPTAIN TO PRIVATE REGARDLESS
OF THEIR LENGTH OF SERVICE. IN ANOTHER MOVE, THE GOV'T
ANNOUNCED A CLEMENCY PROGRAM FOR ALL MILITARY DESERTERS AND
DRAFT EVADERS WHO PRESENTED THEMSELVES TO MILITARY AUTHORITIES
BEFORE FEB 15,1975. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, APPROXIMATELY
1,000 MEN RESPONDED TO THE GOV'T'S CALL.

GOV'T IS ALSO MOVING DIRECTLY AGAINST DRAFT DODGERS.
AUTHORITIES IN MR-4 BEGAN CAMPAIGN FEB 14 TO INDUCE KHMER
DESERTERS AND DRAFT DODGERS SHELTERED IN PAGODAS TO TURN
THEMSELVES IN. SO FAR WELL OVER 1,000 HAVE REPORTEDLY DONE
SO, THOUGH NOW WITHOUT FRICTION BETWEEN GVN AND KHMER
LEADERS. MR-4 AUTHORITIES HAVE ALSO RECENTLY MOVED AGAINST
HOA HAO BAO AN (SELF-DEFENSE FORCE), IN PART TO PREVENT
DESERTIONS FROM RVNAF UNIS TO JOIN BAO AN RANKS.

F. NEW COUNCILMEN ELECTED IN PHU YEN, ELECTIONS SLATED IN PLEIKU

TWO NEW PROVINCE COUNCILMEN, NGUYEN TROUNG HUY AND HO NGUYEN
KIET, WERE ELECTED TO THE PHU YEN PROVINCE COUNCIL IN A
SPECIAL ELECTION HELD FEB 16, DEFEATING FIVE OTHER CANDIDATES FOR
THE TWO POSITIONS. THE LECTION WAS CALLED
FOLLOWING THE INVALIDATION BY THE SUPREME COURT OF THE
ORIGINAL JULY 14,1974 ELECTION FOR ALLEGED VOTING
IRREGULARITIES. BOTH MEN HAD BEEN DEFEATED IN THE
ORIGINAL ELECTION.

ELECTIONS ARE PLANNED FOR 22 VILLAGES IN PLEIKU PROVINCE
MARCH 21 TO ELECT NEW VILLAGE COUNCIL MEN. THESE ELECTIONS
WILL BE HELD TO REPLACE THE PRESENT INCUMBENTS, WHOSE TERMS
EXPIRE APRIL 2.

II. EXTERNAL

A. DANISH AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

AMB FRANTZ B. HOWITZ, THE NEW DANISH AMBASSADOR TO THE
GVN, PRESENTED HIS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT THIEU ON FEB 21.
AMB HOWITZ IS RESIDENT IN BANGKOK AND VISITED SAIG
N FEB 17-21,1975.
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B. GVN AMBASSADOR MEETS DUTCH OFFICIALS

ACCORDING TO VIETNAM PRESS, GVN AMBASSADOR PHAM DANG LAM VISITED HOLLAND FEB 18-21 AND CONFERRED WIT THE DUTCH PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, AND FOREIGN AID MINISTER. THE PRESS REPORT INDICATES THAT THE DUTCH SUPPORTED THE GVN POSITION REGARDING RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS WIH THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS AND PROMISED TO CONSIDER AN INCREASE OF HUMANITARIAN AID TO THE GVN.

NOTE BY OC/T: SAIGON 2108 SEC 2/3 GARBLED TEXT AS RECEIVED, CORRECTION TO FOLLOW

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III. ECONOMIC

A. IMF CONSULTATION

A SPECIAL IMF CONSULTATION GROUP ARRIVED HERE FEB 18 TO BEGIN A WEEK OF TALKS WITH GVN ECONOMIC OFFICIALS. THE 5-MAN TEAM IS HEADED BY W. JOHN R. WOODLEY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE FUND'S ASIA DEPT. THEY ARE REVIEWING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS OF 1974 AND UP-DATING THEIR PROJECTIONS FOR 1975. THE GROUP IS PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO RECENT GVN MEASURES TO RESTRICT IMPORTS. THEIR EVALUATION OF THESE RESTRICTIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY INFLUENCE THE IMF BOARD'S DECISION ON VIET NAM'S REQUEST FOR AN OIL FACILITY LOAN.

B. DOMESTIC REVENUES IN JANUARY UPTURN

THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF TAXATION REPORTED VN\$25.0 BILLION IN REVENUES FOR JANUARY. THAT TOTAL COMPARES WITH VN\$20.3 BILLION COLLECTED IN DEC 1974 AND VN\$22 BILLION IN JAN 1974. THE DEC-JAN INCREASE WAS MAINLY DUE TO A SURGE IN CORPORATE INCOME TAX RECEIPTS, WHICH ROSE FROM VN\$1 BILLION IN DEC TO

VN\$4.7 BILLION IN JAN. THE INCREASE IS PARTLY SEASONAL IN NATURE, REFLECTING EARLY FILING BY FOREIGN CORPORATIONS TO PERMIT EARLY REPATRIATION OF PROFITS.

INDIRECT RECEIPTS WERE ABOUT THE SAME AS THE PREVIOUS MONTH AT VN\$17.8 BILLION. REGISTRATION FEES WERE UP SLIGHTLY TO VN\$0.9
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BILLION AND DIRECT TAXES, INCLUDING CORPORATE, ROSE FROM VN\$2.3 BILLION TO VN\$6.3 BILLION.

WHILE DGT COLLECTED VN\$4.7 BILLION IN PEREQUATION TAXES IN JAN 1974, MAINLY FROM FUEL, THESE RECEIPTS HAVE VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED SINCE LAST SEPT. IN FACT, THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND SUPPLY INDICATED THAT IT HAS BEEN TAKING ABOUT VN\$2 BILLION A MONTH FROM THE PEREQUATION FUND TO SUBSIDIZE OIL COMPANY SALES. IN EFFECT, WITH POL PUMP PRICES FIXED SINCE JANUARY 1974 AND IMPORT COSTS RISING WITH THE PIASTER DEVALUATION, THE OIL COMPANIES ARE UNABLE TO PAY LEGISLATED TAXES AND COVER THEIR OPERATING EXPENSES AND ALLOWED PROFIT MARGIN. THE RESULT HAS

(#)

TO REVENUES.

C. PRICES CONTINUE DOWNTURN

THE POST-TET HOLIDAY PRICE ADJUSTMENT CONTINUED THIS WEEK AS USAID'S CONSUMER INDEX DECLINED 2.5 PERCENT. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, THE INDEX HAS SUNK 8.4 PERCENT. THIS COMPARES TO A 10.4 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO TET.

ALMOST ALL OF THE DROP OCCURRED IN THE FOOD CATEGORY, WHICH WAS DOWN 3.8 PERCENT. THE ARRIVAL OF RICE FROM THE CURRENT HARVEST DEPRESSED AVERAGE SAIGON RICE PRICES BY 2 PERCENT. CONTINUING LAST YEAR'S TREND, RICE HAS BEEN AMONG THE MOST STABLE COMMODITIES IN THE INDEX. MEAT, POULTRY AND FISH PRICES RECORDED SHARP DECLINES THIS WEEK, BUT THESE PRODUCTS ARE STILL UP 8-17 PERCENT THIS YEAR. LOCALLY MADE RICE WINE WAS THE ONLY FOOD COMMODITY TO GAIN THIS WEEK, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE OF THE GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN ON SALES OF SMUGGLED LIQUOR.

THE USAID INDEX FOR SAIGON HAS RISEN 3.4 PERCENT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR AND 29.8 PERCENT FROM A YEAR AGO.
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D. DOLLAR AND GOLD PRICES DIP

BLACK MARKET DOLLAR QUOTES ON FEB 24 WERE VN\$805/US\$1. THIS
PROBABLY TRIGGERED THE SLIGHT DECLINE IN SAIGON GOLD PRICES.
FIGURED AT BLACK MARKET DOLLAR RATES, THE LATEST GOLD QUOTE WAS
\$176.18 AN OUNCE, A SMALL DISCOUNT ON THE HONG KONG PRICE OF
\$183.69.

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PARA. III. B. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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